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The Logic of Religious Affirmation

E. L. ALLEN, PH.D., D.D.*

THERE was an ambiguity in Logical Positivism from the outset. The famous aphorism with which Wittgenstein concludes his *Tractatus*: "Of that about which one cannot speak, one must remain silent,"¹ admits of two interpretations. Is the silence merely the common-sense recognition that "there is nothing there," or is it the awed acknowledgment of a reality that is as indubitable as it is inexpressible? When the traveller arrives at Land's End, does he step off into empty space and perish, or does he face a new element to which he must adjust himself if he is to continue his journey? In the first case, the positivism dictates to the logic, what cannot be stated and verified as so much matter-of-fact must be relegated to the limbo of the meaningless. In the second case, the attempt may be made—as has so often been done—to express the inexpressible in a special language of symbol, hint, and suggestion. The value of this language lies not in any statement about a distinct class of metaphysical objects, but in what it mediates—the transformation of the self in its encounter with a transcendent world.

Even A. J. Ayer admits that, devastating though his criterion of meaning is, it is not the only possible one. Is it indeed more than the one he himself prefers to operate with? That being the case, may not his preference have just those emotional roots that he despises in the thinking of others? John Wisdom's essay on *Gods* in the first volume of *Logic and Language* is the work of one who realises that religious statements cannot be brushed aside as nonsense, that they very clearly do have sense for multitudes of people, so that the philosopher's business is to find out in what that sense consists and to enquire into its claim to truth. Basil Mitchell tells us that "the philosopher is not now going to rule out theological statements from the start." He confronts us with "the more modest or at least more cagey question 'What is the logic of theological statements?'" or, in the self-consciously homespun metaphors of Professor Ryle, 'How do theological sentences behave?' 'What jobs do God-propositions do?'"² It is to this problem I address myself in what follows, asking: (a) What is the meaning of statements about God? and (b) How can such statements be verified?

What, then, is the meaning of statements about God? I would say that such statements are not about a particular object called God that falls within our experience, but about the ultimate

*Personal note at foot of p. 46.

¹ *Worauf man kann nicht sprechen, darauf muss man schweigen.*

² *The Socratic*, p.6f.

significance of experience as a whole. An illustration will show what this means. A statesman faces a moment of grave decision and consults a number of experts, each of whom supplies the information necessary to deal with the situation at his level. Thus, his political adviser can tell him how far he can hope to rally support in the party and in the country for what he has in mind; the economist what the implications of this and that choice will be for the country's industrial position; and so on. But in the last resort the statesman has to make his own decision and to accept responsibility for it. Here he reaches the moral level of the situation: which course will be the right one for him to take? At this point he is more than ever conscious of his limitations, of the inadequacy of the information at his disposal and the fateful consequences of an error on his part. In the last resort, he can but act on the best he knows and leave the issue to a Power and Wisdom beyond his own. At that moment he is in the presence of God, and any description he gives of it is a statement about God.

Clearly, if he is to express himself on what has happened, he will be attempting to put into words what words can never contain. If he makes a neat and connected statement, we shall infer that there has been no encounter with the Transcendent. The best evidence of the reality of such an experience is that a man falls back on hint and suggestion, metaphor and broken phrase. Where is the most valid analogy for all this to be found? I would answer this question by asking another. Where, in our everyday life, are we most aware that we touch upon the ultimate significance of experience? What is that which gives savour and meaning to all else? Ask the prisoner of war who has been detained in a foreign land for years, and he will tell you that the one thing that makes it worth while to live is the thought that there are persons at home who care for him and the hope that he may be reunited with them one day. It is in personal relations that we meet the ultimate significance of our experience, and therefore it is in that realm that we, at least we Westerners, find our least inadequate analogies. "As the God, with whom I have a person-to-person encounter, he is the subject of all the symbolic statements in which I express my ultimate concern."³

But the argument must be carried a step further. The ultimate significance of experience is not something spread out to an equal depth over all the content of experience. It tends rather to be concentrated at certain points. There are certain illuminating moments in which we see what in other moments we should have missed. That is true of all the great religions. The illuminating moment for the Jew is the Exodus, the memory of which heartens him amid the disappointments and tragic sufferings of his long exile. For the Christian it is the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, for the Buddhist the founder's enlightenment and the saving know-

³ Paul Tillich: *Love, Power and Justice*, p.109.

ledge that came with it. We find the same phenomenon in the denominations. What would Lutheranism be, for example, without Luther's experience in the Black Tower? Or Methodism without Wesley's conversion? The individual obeys the same law. Some one experience of numinous quality reveals to him the significance of every moment of his life, a glimpse of the sacred invests the secular with significance, in a moment of time he sees into the depths of eternity. Here lies a difficulty, for what is self-evident to the recipient of such illumination is questionable to the onlooker. In other words, the issue of verification now arises.

Before coming to this, however, it is advisable to expand somewhat what has already been said. God is not an object within the world, he is the reason why there are objects and a world. Hence one cannot so much speak about him as *intend* him by the manner in which one speaks about objects. I can speak *about* Julius Caesar or my nephew without speaking *to* them, but that is not the case with God. God is he about whom I cannot speak without at the same time speaking to him. Unless I speak of him as present I am actually speaking of something other than he. For there is no moment of human experience from which he is absent. In him we live, and move, and have our being. To be sure, that could be understood in a sense that would inspire terror, as though God were the Judge scrutinising every action and overlooking no fault. Primarily, however, God is to be thought of as entering every human life from moment to moment with an offer of his fellowship and of the enlarged possibilities this brings with it. Only when God is rejected as an overture of love do we find ourselves facing him as sentence on our folly.

From all this it follows that God is beyond all demonstration, because he is not an object within the world but a reality that transcends all knowledge appropriate to objects. He cannot be demonstrated because he is presupposed in all demonstrations. There can be a proof of some particular truth, but not of truth itself, as in the great expression of Augustine, God is the Truth by which all truths are true. It is possible to single out and name the particular objects in my room at this moment; but I do not include the light among them. The light is rather that by which the process is possible. The error of all arguments for God's existence is that, if he were demonstrated, he would be reduced thereby to something less than God, to one more object, albeit of a peculiar order. God's relation to us is so fundamental that all our thinking and acting fall within it. The discovery of God comes with the realisation that he himself made the search possible.

So much for the question of meaning. Statements about God, I have suggested, are statements about the ultimate significance of our experience, as it is apprehended in some illuminating moment charged with numinous quality and expressed in symbols, the least inadequate of which will be drawn from personal relationships. I

now go on to ask by what criterion we decide whether such statements possess truth in addition to meaning. I begin by enquiring what is the basic form for such statements, from which other forms are derived. There can be little doubt that the confession is a basic form of religious affirmation. This alone is a statement about God that is at the same time a statement to him. So the devout Jew repeats the *Shema* each day: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." All Christian creeds stem from the simple "Jesus is Messiah" and "Jesus is Lord." Such a confession does not give information: it commits the person who makes it, it is the outward expression of an inward transformation.

Perhaps one might compare the religious confession with what is in some respects its secular counterpart, the oath of allegiance to a sovereign. Everyone who listened in to the Coronation service or watched it on TV will have been moved by the moment when the Duke of Edinburgh knelt before the Queen, put his hands between hers, and pledged himself as her man for life and death. Here is a kind of commitment that approaches the religious one, is indeed surrounded with the numinous. We may say that the confession stresses what is presupposed in the oath, the qualities in the one addressed that elicit and justify the commitment entered into. The confession makes an affirmation about God as implying the will to live henceforth by that affirmation: the oath of allegiance announces such a resolution as implying that the sovereign is worthy of it. In the case of the oath, its meaning clearly lies in the engagement undertaken; where there is not this personal commitment, we should say that it is meaningless. So the confession "I believe in God the Father Almighty" is meaningless if he who makes it lives thereafter as though it were not true.

Now, we do not ask whether the oath a person has taken is true or false, but whether he himself is true or false. If he acts on what he has undertaken, then he is a true man; otherwise, he is false. Further, in a modern constitutional monarchy, a man may be false to his oath by some dereliction of duty that does not concern the sovereign personally but by some failure in what is required of him as subject and responsible citizen. So it is with the confession. There is a specifically religious criterion of truth and falsehood, and this is concerned, not with whether statements are true or false, but with whether persons are. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (*I John ii, 4*). That is to say, because his life does not accord with his profession, he is himself false. The true disciple, on the other hand, is one who acts upon any affirmation about God he has made. His life authenticates his confession. And it is often by our conduct towards our fellows that we show whether we are true or false. "Whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his

brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?" (*I John iii, 17*).

It is important that we should do justice to this specifically religious criterion of truth. It is the only one that accords with what has been said earlier about God. If God is involved in every situation as that which invests it with ultimate significance by the offer he makes to our freedom and responsibility, then the question God asks of me: Are you true or false? must take precedence of the question I ask myself: Is this statement about God true or false? The second question, as I shall urge immediately, is quite legitimate; but it arises only in some measure as I contract out of the situation in which my responsibility was challenged. Yet this personal criterion cannot be the only one, for the simple reason that it does not enable us to distinguish between faith and fanaticism. The fact that a member of the Hitler Youth ordered his whole life in accordance with his acknowledgment of the Leader as sent from God does not weigh with me an instant when I am assessing Hitler's claims. There is perhaps no idea so fantastic and preposterous that some one has not been found willing to yield it a lifetime of unswerving devotion. The believer may claim that his insight is self-authenticating. No doubt it is, but it may none the less be false.

So we introduce a second criterion, one which we are accustomed to employ elsewhere. It is that of compatibility with the rest of our experience. Can the illuminating moment shed light, not only on my private life, but on the great problems of nature and history? In the long run, a man has no right to assert as true what he cannot bring into accord with the rest of his knowledge and standards. This is the old question of the relation between religion and science. What is wanted is not that one of these should be abandoned when it conflicts with the other, but that there should be a constant interplay between the two, each learning from the other, criticising and correcting the other, so that they grow together into a unity by which a man can live. Tension, of course, will always remain, but the reason for the tension will be seen. It will be seen also that the tension brings more than could be gained from a quick resolution of the conflict. In all this there is nothing new. I am concerned here to maintain that this second criterion, that of compatibility and coherence, only comes into play after the first criterion, that of fidelity in one's life to the commitment one has entered upon with God.

Let me draw out briefly the consequences of this position by elaborating the distinction between meaning and truth where religious affirmations are concerned. When I say to a person: "Your idea of God is false," what do I mean? I mean that he thinks of God in a manner that is inconsistent with his scientific knowledge, his moral standards, his treatment of his fellows, and so on. Or, it may be, in a manner inconsistent with the scientific knowledge I possess and would urge upon him. He must rethink

what he habitually affirms about God so as to bring it into some sort of agreement with what is regarded as true elsewhere. But what do I mean when I say to him: "Your idea of God is meaningless"? I mean in this case that there is nothing in it that has power to shape his life, that it makes no difference to him in practice. The assertion that God is love is meaningless, as the author of *I John* would say, unless he who makes it goes forth in love to his fellows. The assertion that Christ redeemed the world by his sacrifice is meaningless on the lips of one whose sole concern is with his own interest. He is himself false and his statement is without meaning.

Here lies the defect of Wisdom's parable of the two gardeners, which otherwise brings out quite clearly that statements about God are not about any object within our experience, but about how that experience is to be interpreted.⁴ Two men return to a neglected garden and find some plants among the weeds with unexpected vigour. One concludes that a gardener has been working in it, though admittedly no one has seen him there, while the other cannot accept this. There is a difference between them that no evidence can dispel, because it is concerning the way in which the available evidence is to be read. They feel differently about the garden. As Wisdom goes on, we find that one of the two is related to the garden as though there were a personal power somehow in it or active in it, while the other is not. And he naïvely dismisses this as animism that ought to have been long since outgrown, a mere survival from a pre-scientific age in some people's minds. That is to say, he makes the religious affirmation a theoretical one, an explanation alongside of other explanations. I have urged that its significance is practical in the first instance, that it is not an explanation of the garden, but a commitment to take off one's coat and get to work in it.

I admit that this is a somewhat disconcerting account of religious and theological statements. It means clearly enough that no religious statement has meaning for him who makes it—and without this has it meaning at all?—save as it can be reduced to some form of confession and its corresponding commitment. Here is an Occam's razor for the theologian with a vengeance! But it means also that religious affirmations are anchored in the actual world as truly as scientific propositions. If we test the latter by staging an experiment to secure a definite result in terms of sense-perception and checking it by the outcome of the experiment, we have the right to test the former by observing how he who makes them acts in a concrete situation of responsibility for his fellows. The criterion of coherence is necessary, as I have said, as a safeguard against fanaticism, but it cannot be a substitute for the other criterion, according to which a religious affirmation is meaningful in proportion as he who makes it commits himself by his affirmation and that he is true or false as he does or does not allow that meaning to transform his life.

⁴ *Essays on Logic and Language, First Series*, pp.102ff.

The Freedom of Science

H. J. McLACHLAN, M.A., B.D., D.PHIL.

THE British Association for the Advancement of Science, whose annual meeting has been called "the Parliament of Science," has, as one of its objects, "to work for the removal of any public disadvantages which hinder the progress of science." This object assumes increased significance to-day, for several reasons:—

- (a) because of the importance of science in the life of the nation;
- (b) because of the international character of science;
- (c) because of the close connection of science with the survival of the nation in this highly competitive world, where trade and industrial rivalry are accompanied by political and ideological warfare.

In this setting, the problem of the Freedom of Science assumes large proportions. It is, of course, an ethical as well as a political problem. Professor A. V. Hill, in his Presidential address at Belfast in 1952, said that there was really no ethical dilemma for the scientist as scientist, but only for the scientist as citizen. This problem concerns us all. We have to consider two questions: whether the scientist has not responsibilities towards the community and the wider world, and whether the ordinary citizen has not also some responsibilities towards those engaged in scientific research, discovery, and the applied sciences.

Science may be defined both as systematic knowledge of the natural world *and* as the pursuit of such knowledge. It is not only a body of knowledge, it is also a process of describing and controlling the material world. The scientist is a seeker after truth, and his search is not unlike the quest of those who, in the sphere of religion, freely seek to know the truth about God and man. The scientist and the adherent of a free faith are allied in their attachment to truth. Both desire to follow after truth wherever it may lead. Both believe in freedom. The scientist holds that there should be no restrictions on scientific knowledge, the believer in a free religious faith dispenses with creeds and presuppositions which might hamper his quest, in order that he may come at the truth about God and his Universe from whatever angle it may be approached.

There has been many a clash between Religion and Science. One took place in Belfast in 1874 when John Tyndall delivered his celebrated Presidential address to the British Association, denounced, as Professor Hill reminded us, from "every pulpit in the city." Religion and Science have clashed, but their opposition is by no

means a necessity. Both require freedom in which to flourish, and both languish where authoritarianism prevails. It is, therefore, in the highest interests of Religion that Science should preserve its freedom and in the highest interests of Science that religious thinking should be free. To seek the truth in either sphere demands an atmosphere of freedom. It was for freedom that the liberal dissenters contended in the 18th century; free inquiry, they held, could not hurt Christianity; much rather it would purify and exalt it.

Now free inquiry, or the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, is the very essence of Science. Amongst the early Greeks, the pioneers of geometry, cosmology, and geography, in the Islamic schools of medicine of the Middle Ages, in Italy, the Netherlands, and England during the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century—and ever since—the scientist has been led by curiosity, impelled by the desire to find out things entirely, without let or hindrance. If we can speak of a “tradition of Science,” as I think we can, this tradition has been characterised by integrity of thought, by the wish to follow out research and experiment to its logical conclusion and by the refusal to be put off by warning notices erected by authority in such terms as “Keep out!” or “Entry forbidden!”

At the beginning of the modern age of Science, it is true, the Church and the universities controlled by the Church restricted Science by obscurantist regulation and prohibition. More than a hundred years before the time of Galileo, Leonardo da Vinci (1452—1519) had written in large letters in his Notebooks (not made public until 1880—83) these words: “The sun does not move.” Prudently, he never published his manuscripts. One of the reasons for this is undoubtedly that they contained this and other “unorthodox” theories that ran counter to the accepted cosmology based upon Aristotle and the Bible, theories for which the ecclesiastical authorities of his day would have taken their author severely to task.

Galileo's (1564—1642) conflict with the Church of his day is well-known. The professors of philosophy and theology at Padua and Florence refused to look through his telescope and forbade him to teach. But nowadays such an attitude is unthinkable. Science has assumed such importance, power, and prestige that it may be said to overshadow the Church which once overshadowed it. Indeed, it is the one dominating factor in 20th century civilisation, the main driving force transforming all our lives. Food and water, clothing, housing, lighting, heating, health, communications, trade, industry and agriculture, travel, education, and social relationships—all these have been radically affected and are being constantly modified by the progress of Science. The recent war has shown the vastness of the forces that can now be utilised by men, who, it may be said in passing, are not fit to command such powers. So rapid has been the advance of Science that scientific discovery bids fair to engulf mankind. Once the Cinderella of the educational world, it is now the lusty

pensioner of industry and the State, both of which are pouring money into scientific establishments and research centres, universities, and technical colleges. Whereas, years ago, some wealthy patron, like Lord Shelburne, might be found to encourage a Joseph Priestley to carry out his researches into the nature of gases in the quiet convenience of his country seat at Calne, to-day the scale of research has grown so tremendously that only the wealthiest industrial concerns, and in certain fields the State, can finance the progress of Science. This is especially true, for instance, in the field of nuclear physics, where laboratories and plant reach such proportions as they now do at Harwell, Sellafield and elsewhere.

This being so, and the State now being directly or indirectly (through Government grants to universities) the main promoter of scientific research, an entirely new situation has arisen. Those who pay the piper naturally want to call the tune. Thus in a new and more pronounced form than ever in Galileo's day has arisen the problem of the freedom of Science. Not only is it quite impossible for a scientist to carry out certain kinds of research, however much he may want to, through sheer lack of funds, but he can only do so if he becomes a servant of the State and enters one of the Government establishments, hedged about with red tape and smothered as some of them are in secrecy.¹

Lack of means may therefore be said to fetter Science as effectively as police supervision. And further, the free pursuit of knowledge is cramped and distorted by the control, in the ultimate resort, imposed by political considerations. Here lies the rub!

The real danger at the present time is not the suppression of Science in any particular, but its exploitation in certain ways that cannot be considered beneficial to mankind. Obvious examples of the exploitation of science are the construction of bigger and better atomic bombs and the preparation of bacterial cultures for purposes of warfare. At the same time, research upon the prevention and cure of cancer is largely dependent upon voluntary contributions. Thus we are faced with the ironical situation that research whose aim is to destroy life takes precedence over life-saving, obtaining colossal Government subsidies, whilst the efforts of scientists to combat death languish for want of financial backing! It would

1 The rising cost of scientific research may be seen from the following figures. The cost of an electron microscope is from £3,000 to £5,000. A computer (calculating machine) may cost anything up to £100,000. The cost of a cyclotron (machine for the acceleration of nuclear particles to high energies) is from £100,000 to £1,000,000. An example of large-scale research, only made possible by Government grant, is radio-astronomy. The new radio-telescope now being erected at Jodrell Bank, Cheshire, for Manchester University, will cost no less than £350,000. Even Governments are feeling the pinch! A ten-nation laboratory is shortly to be built by the European Council for Nuclear Research, an international laboratory of which the object is pure science and which is the direct responsibility of the Governments participating. The decision to create it is a response to the rising cost of experimental nuclear physics in terms both of money and technical resources.

seem that what threatens to frustrate Science is the same thing that threatens to destroy man, namely—War.

Years ago, I remember hearing Miss K. D. Courtney, an authority on the subject, describe the exploitation by governments of the aeroplane. It resulted in a complete change of design; the adaptation of the aeroplane for war rather than for civil uses. In order to increase speed and manoeuvrability for warfare, the petrol engine was installed, whereas an oil-engine could have been developed that did not explode and catch fire, resulting in almost certain death to the occupants whenever there is an air-crash. The natural line of development of the aeroplane was thus distorted for warlike ends. It would seem that a further and more gigantic distortion and frustration of Science is occurring to-day in the field of atomic research.

This underlines the serious problem now confronting scientist and citizen. Science is not free to-day because it is a genie commanding such tremendous power that it must be led about in chains. That is one way of looking at it. Another way to state the problem is to say that Science is a slave to society because society desires to employ it selfishly and for nationalistic ends. Hence the era of the free communication of scientific results, so characteristic of Science hitherto, would seem to be almost at an end.

The secrecy which is corrupting the free discussion of Science is, of course, a product of the ideological rivalry of governments. Politics have invaded the scientific field and changed men's attitude to a sphere of thought and endeavour formerly considered universal and international. An instance of the way in which international tensions are frustrating scientific co-operation between even friendly countries is the case of Professor C. F. Powell, head of the Physics Department of Bristol University and a Nobel prizewinner. He is one of the world's leading authorities on cosmic radiation and high energy nuclear physics. He was to have gone last year on a lecture-tour in Germany sponsored by the Foreign Office. But in January, 1953, the Foreign Office withdrew its support from Professor Powell because of his association with the peace movement. He has stated that he has no political affiliations and that in his opinion "nothing of any direct military or industrial application will come from (his) particular work in the next thirty years." "In that particular field," he has said, "I would personally see no objection to an exchange of information even with the Russian scientists, although I think that we in Bristol lead the world and the Russians have a long way to go."

This new fact, that science is no longer entirely free, and that the international camaraderie of Science is at an end, is a very serious one. War has brought home to governments the critical importance of scientific research in the modern economy, and the State has been quick to limit the effective freedom of the scientist and to urge him to work as a salaried employee for the production

of implements of war. This 'conscription of Science' means that its power may be used for good or ill, according to the will of those who control the purse-strings of the State and the bodies of the scientists.

Now there is a growing awareness amongst scientists and thinking people everywhere of the frustration and distortion with which Science is threatened. Those scientists most influenced by the Marxist interpretation of history are by no means the only ones who have seen the red light. Even such an elder statesman as Professor A. V. Hill has hinted at the grave ethical dilemmas which confront both scientist and citizen to-day. Many feel that Science should be allowed to develop freely by means of public encouragement with, so far as possible, no strings attached. A difficulty arises, however, from the fact that public money is being used for scientific purposes and therefore the public, represented by Parliament and Government, must have some say in its expenditure. The problem is how to insulate scientists from interference and dictation, how to preserve their freedom of thought and action, how to steer a way between irresponsibility and, in these days of opposed political ideologies, treachery and the calling of the tune by an almighty patron who pays the piper.

Freedom in scientific research is incompatible with dictatorship. Bertrand Russell thinks that Germany might have won the war if Hitler could have endured Jewish scientists. And Russia will probably have less grain than if Stalin had not insisted upon the adoption of Lysenko's theories. "It is highly probable," writes Russell², "that there will soon be, in Russia, a similar governmental incursion into the domain of nuclear physics. I do not doubt that, if there is no war during the next 15 years, Russian scientific war technique will, at the end of that time, be very markedly inferior to that of the West, and that the inferiority will be directly traceable to dictatorship."³

Probably no government, in the present state of the world, can be blamed for demanding political orthodoxy of nuclear physicists. But there is no justification whatever for demanding scientific orthodoxy. A way out of the dilemma of governmental patronage may well be the acceptance of the principle that a scientist should be given opportunity in proportion to his ability, not to his scientific orthodoxy. So far, says Russell, this principle is fairly well observed in the West. A greater menace to Science than positive restrictions imposed by governments is, however, what Professor Macbeath has lately called "the tainted atmosphere of a society which rewards conformity and penalises dissent, whose effect may be to stop the emergence of scientists, of men imbued with the spirit of free

2 *The Impact of Science on Society*, 1952 (pp. 71-2).

3 With the recent case of Dr. Robert Oppenheimer in mind, Russell might now be disposed to revise his opinion somewhat.

inquiry." Scientists, no more than other men, are able to resist the pervading influence and outlook of an age.

Science ought to be used, we believe, for the benefit, not for the destruction of mankind. Said the Duke of Edinburgh at the conclusion of his Presidential address to the British Association in 1951: "It is clearly our duty as citizens to see that science is used for the benefit of mankind." This is widely felt. It should not be forgotten that a distinguished and representative group of American and Commonwealth scientists protested very strongly, at the time, against the use of the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Many scientists do realise their responsibility to the community. Professor Oliphant, for example, has said that "it is one of the tragedies of our day that science, which has so increased the intellectual stature of man and is such a power for good, should be directed to the development of weapons for the wholesale destruction of man" and he adds significantly, "the total sum devoted to scientific investigation and development for purposes of war is greater in the United Kingdom than the sum spent on research of all other kinds."

Scientists, like doctors, bear a special responsibility. By the transformations of time they are becoming in some ways the new priests of our age. But the ordinary citizen has also his responsibilities to the scientist. It is surely wrong for him to put the scientist in the position of a man who has to choose between dealing out death and the loss of his livelihood. Nor is it fair to place upon the scientist the onus of moral decision on behalf of the community. For the good of humanity, science ought to be free and its results widely known, so that all may benefit from them. If this is not so at present, the blame cannot be laid at the door of Science.

The individual citizen must take his share of responsibility for decisions affecting the lethal applications of Science. It must be brought home to him that it is in his name that the scientist is asked to pursue researches the purpose of which is mass-destruction. This entails a personal attitude (and perhaps a moral decision) that refuses to find scapegoats for sin in either statesmen or scientists.

As Society is now organised, it becomes increasingly difficult to "fix" responsibility for any action of the State. This became clear in the course of the Nuremberg trials. One of the main questions at issue was whether any single individual could be regarded as accountable for crimes committed, for example, against the Jews. At what point, in the long, impersonal processes in which the State-at-War involves the individual, is the boundary-line of humaneness transgressed? The tendency of our age is to submerge personal responsibility and Christian duty beneath a cloud of ideological verbiage and State control. Against these there is only one final protection, one ultimate appeal.

Both scientist and citizen have responsibilities towards each other. But they also have a grave responsibility to a Higher Power.

The Christian believes that the moral judgment possesses an imperative that may not be flouted. We must listen to an Authority higher than the State. In the language of religion: "We must obey God rather than men."

It is possible that scientists could so abuse Nature, become such a threat to humanity, and become such a means of terrible tyranny over the minds and souls of men, that there would be a point at which no honourable man would allow himself to be enlisted as a scientist of the State. We know that in the last war some German doctors fell far below the ethics of their profession and prostituted their knowledge. It is possible that Science could be used as an engine of tyranny. But it must always be borne in mind that the community as a whole would be to blame for such a state of affairs, and not merely a group of men called "scientists."

To prevent this and to promote a Science that continues to be distinguished for its disinterestedness, its spirit of free inquiry and its humaneness, the ordinary citizen must realise his responsibility to the scientist, to his fellow man, and to God. And the scientist, for his part, will have to evolve a code not unlike that of the members of the medical profession, which does not permit their art to be used, save for the healing of man. If scientific men had the same ethics as the doctors, they could probably save the world.

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The Limits of Reason in Religion

GEORG G. IGGERS, PH.D.

FEW religious movements have begun as triumphantly optimistic, or as convinced that it had discovered the final truth to the questions of religion, as did modern religious liberalism. The intellectual development and the cultural crisis of the past half century have seriously undermined the unconditional confidence in science which formed the basis of a large part of religious liberalism. Even more than the traditional religions, must modern liberalism examine its intellectual foundations in order to save its intent.

The basic intent of religious liberalism, like that of all forms of liberalism, has been to free man from arbitrary constraint, in this case from the intellectual barriers erected by the traditional religions.

Modern religious liberalism was born in the struggle to justify the validity of human reason and science against superstition and prejudice. In the eighteenth century the Deists fought against institutionalised Christianity as the symbol of the repression of free rational inquiry and as the sanction of social injustices. In the nineteenth century, liberal religion received the form known to most Unitarians to-day in the defence of the scientific outlook against the literal interpretation of the Bible. The rationalists, by showing the incompatibility of Christian dogma and the Bible stories with the latest conclusions of biology, archaeology, and history, attempted very successfully to demonstrate the mythological character of the traditional religions. The contribution of the rationalists in freeing the mind of the common man from false knowledge and false fears and inhibitions cannot be overlooked, but neither can the incompleteness of their solution.

The conception of science and of a scientific religion of the average religious liberal was, however, very different from that of the laboratory scientist. For the scientist, science is a method of inquiry by which he, on the basis of empirical observations, postulates hypotheses, directly or indirectly empirically verifiable, which help to relate a series of phenomena. For the religious liberal, science was not merely a method but a philosophy. While he explicitly rejected metaphysics, his conception of science and of a scientific religion still rested on metaphysical assumptions. The "scientific" religionist thus assumed that the universe was governed by a mechanical lawfulness which could be fully discovered by the human mind. In the realm of human history, he saw the progressive increase of man's understanding of the world and of his ability to control his environment. In the future, he saw man, freed from the shackles of false religion, acquiring a new morality and erecting a "scientific" society, growing ceaselessly, physically, intellectually and morally.

Looking back over the past fifty years, the religious liberal, including many Unitarians, must be deeply disappointed. First of all the very conception of science and of scientific method, held by the worshippers of science of fifty years ago, has been sharply challenged by the development of science itself. The tremendous discoveries in physics, mathematics, and psychology have shown the universe to be much more complex than the popular scientist of the nineteenth century imagined. That all-too-solid world of Newton and Descartes, of absolute time and absolute space, of indestructible matter, of a logic with reference to reality, of Euclidean geometry, and of the rationally conscious mind, has melted away. Moreover, the relativity of all knowledge, and particularly of value knowledge has been emphasised not only in physics, but also in sociology, anthropology, and psychology. This applies particularly in the realm of the ethics; and the logical positivists, among other philosophic schools, have even denied the possibility of meaningful ethical judgments.

The religious liberal must be gravely disappointed by the failure of "scientific" religion in the moral realm. The last fifty years have indeed seen tremendous strides in science, technology, and popular enlightenment. They have also seen the rapid growth of what was considered the "scientific attitude" to religion and the collapse of the traditional religious mythologies, though, on the surface, this may have happened less in the United States than in Europe. The average citizen in the Western World, including the average church-goer, no longer fears God or the devil and has a basically naturalistic conception of the universe. But while the "scientific" attack against religion was often closely interwoven with a definite humanitarianism and undoubtedly has contributed greatly to awakening concern for human welfare, it would be difficult to say that the world in the mid-twentieth century, while less God-fearing, is more moral. The vacuum left by the collapse of traditional moral and religious sanctions has been filled, in part, by powerful currents of nihilism which have sprung up in the twentieth century and, in part, by a cult of wealth and power. This most enlightened century has seen the powerful forces of science and technology turned to the mass destruction of human life and to the subjugation of man. The ruthless totalitarianism of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Soviet Russia, the mass extermination of the Jews, the indiscriminate destruction of civilian populations by aerial warfare, the atomic armament race are all monuments to an age of enlightened barbarism.

Does this signify that religious liberalism and the scientific or rational approach to the problems of human life has been an error on scientific or on ethical grounds and that we should turn back to the old-time religion? I certainly do not think so, but it is high time to examine the foundations of religious liberalism.

The basic error of religious liberalism has not been its reliance on science but rather its misunderstanding of the function of science and of the nature of religion. Certainly science is our only reliable means of attaining knowledge of the universe on which there can be common agreement and on the basis of which we can predict future phenomena, if only tentatively. But at the same time we must realise that science cannot tell us what is good and what evil, except in a purely instrumental way. It can tell us what is good, or rather instrumental, in curing or killing a person, but it cannot establish the value of human life or death—that is a question of subjective choice. The realm of fact belongs to science while the realm of value choices and sanctions lies partly outside it.

Scientific religion, in failing to recognise this distinction, has indeed shared in the cardinal error of fundamentalism. Both fundamentalism and "scientific" religion have confused the realm of science with that of religion. Where fundamentalism has made statements of cosmological or historical significance, for example, the creation of the world in six days, the virgin birth, immortality,

or the factual existence of a God, it has made statements of fact and these statements have become subject to scientific refutation. But when liberal religion has seen its primary task as that of refuting these theological assumptions, it, too, has confused the essential function of religion with that of science. Indeed the great religious traditions—Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Greek paganism, Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism have all had a profounder understanding of religion than either fundamentalism or “scientific” religion. The traditional mythologies, even if they were primitive attempts at the explanation of reality, always had a basically symbolic significance. To understand the essence of Christianity as lying in the historicity of the Jesus or the Bible story—as fundamentalists and many of their rationalistic critics would hold—is to misunderstand the very core of Christianity. The life of Jesus is rather to be seen as symbolic of a way of life incumbent on the believer. To define Judaism as belief in one omniscient and omnipotent God, Jehovah, is inadequate and overlooks the basic pattern of conduct for which God stands as the guarantor of the ethical life which he commands as in “Thou shalt not keep thy servant’s wages overnight, for I am the Lord.”

What, then, is the realm of religion? To identify it with beliefs which require faith is inadequate as, for example, the belief that religion deals with that area of reality which science has not explained and cannot explain. Faith in the existence of God or of immortality is considered legitimate insofar as science can neither prove nor disprove these contentions, such beliefs being compared to hypotheses in science. But while an hypothesis, as an attempt to offer possible explanations of the interrelation of phenomena, is subject to the constant test of experience, faith in a supernatural or meta-scientific reality is an arbitrary stab in the dark, subject to no such tests.

The basic problem with which the great religions have dealt has been that of man’s search for the meaning of his existence. Yet human life is not static but a process involving perpetual activity. In searching for an answer to the problem of the meaning of life, the individual is looking not for a static formula, or intellectual description of reality, but rather for an answer which relates him to this reality in terms of action. The question: “Who am I?” inescapably means: “What shall I do?” Meaningful existence has always required an answer. Religious symbols, myths and traditions are alive only if they involve our responsibility. Thus, Kierkegaard, in the defence of the traditional Christian dogma of the fall of man, pointed out that the historicity of the fall was irrelevant and, even if it had occurred, would have no religious significance unless the individual experienced its significance in his own life. Static religious conceptions, whether belief in the one God or the saviour, are irrelevant to human existence as such, and gain relevance only when they involve us in action.

Where does the religious liberal, aware of the dynamic character of religion, stand here? He is in a much more difficult position than his rationalistic colleague. What distinguishes liberal religion most sharply from traditional religion is its refusal to accept ready-made answers. Unlike the latter, it is not a part of a tradition with clearly defined values from which the religious liberal receives his fundamental orientation to life without further reflection. In contrast to the rationalist, whose primary task was the elimination of the unscientific elements in traditional religion, the liberal must find a positive answer to the question of the meaning of human life. Yet while he cannot, on the one hand, derive these values from an arbitrary faith in the existence of a deity, he realises, on the other hand, the impossibility of an empirical science of ethics. Even more fully than the traditional religionist, he must accept the finitude of man. The individual man is the ultimate judge of religious knowledge. And yet, he is only a point in the tremendous time-space continuum, limited in experience by his historical and social setting and personality. All knowledge must be relative to the human situation. Not only are we unable to transcend the realm of human experience but our very knowledge is coloured by our personal situation. Any clear, absolute answer to the question of the meaning of human life is impossible. Yet the religious man as a living, acting human being, seeking to act meaningfully, must make meaningful choices.

It is here that faith enters. The choice is neither entirely arbitrary nor conscious. And yet this choice involves the religious man in conscious identification with a set of principles of action, and ideals. This identification is determined largely by the personal situation, by the interplay of the personality in its human environment. Yet the religious man is firmly convinced of the rightness of these principles. This conviction is not the result of experience in terms of empirical observation though it is in many ways the result of experience in a wider sense, encompassing the process of living and maturation.

The fundamental value choice of the religious liberal has been that of the dignity of man. Basically this is an irrational conviction. No empirical data uphold this faith. Science is ethically neutral; there is nothing in nature which prohibits the use of man as a manipulable object which can be destroyed or enslaved. The Nazis could ruthlessly gas six million human beings and make soap from human fats without the equilibrium in nature being in the least disturbed. So the liberal's belief in the sanctity of human life and in the full development of its potentialities is an act of faith. The liberal is deeply convinced of the wrongness of all forms of slavery over man—of the slavery over man's body by want and sickness, or economic exploitation or political regimentation and of the slavery over man's mind by ignorance, superstition, or arbitrary authority. The scientific liberal fights also against mental enslavement.

The liberal's faith is inseparable from action. His basic beliefs are not static concepts about the order of the universe; instead, they refer to daily life. The conservative Christian can affirm the trinity, the incarnation, and the resurrection as metaphysical truths and historical events which have no bearing on his life on Monday morning. But for the liberal religionist to speak of the brotherhood of man on Sunday and to discriminate against coloured folk on Monday means that on Sunday he either spoke nonsense or was a hypocrite.

Liberal religion is a faith of action. Finding himself in a world in which men are regarded as means rather than as ends, the liberal is committed by his conviction to struggle for the attainment of a just society. In accordance with his regard for the dignity of the individual, his main weapons are persuasion and example. He is not a millennialist—the ideal social order will not be imposed by God nor is it the inevitable outcome of history or civilisation. Only by the action of responsible, value-conscious individuals can we remove some of the suffering and injustice and more closely approximate life to our ideals. The religious liberal cannot talk about religion isolated from life; religion is value-conscious life. It involves social and political action, intellectual inquiry, education, art, health, economics. In our present-day society, the religious liberal cannot regard passively the threats to freedom of opinion; the intolerance against persons on grounds of race, religion, or national origin; poverty and ignorance in the midst of plenty, and the glorification of economic and military power.

Liberal religionists have always looked with a certain condescension upon the traditional religions and their symbols. Yet we must realise that we are essentially the secular expression of the great humanitarian Judaeo-Christian tradition. Two life-attitudes have co-existed in this tradition, one positive, affirming the significance of human life, the potential goodness of man, the responsibility of the individual, and the task of man to serve God by sanctifying his life in the service of his fellow-man; the other one negatives that of renunciation, of belief in the inherent wickedness of man, of the dualisms of spirit and flesh, religion and society, and of the hopelessness of man's attempt to save himself. Liberal religion, rather than being a break with the past, is a reiteration in the setting of our time of the basic philosophy of man of the great Jewish prophets.

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De-Mythologising Christianity

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THE New Testament is the product of a world view and of thought forms that are utterly remote from ours. In an unscientific age that fact presented no difficulties, nor for those with no sense of history, such as the various kinds of Fundamentalists. For all such the New Testament can be accepted quite uncritically. But for anyone who seeks to reconcile Christianity with a modern view of the world it is not possible to seek the easy way out of the difficulties by ignoring the intellectual problems. It is with the presentation of the Gospel to the modern age that Rudolf Bultmann is concerned in the now celebrated essay, written during the war, entitled: *Neues Testament: Das Problem der Entmythologisierung der neutestamentlichen Verkündigung* (The New Testament and Mythology: the problem of de-mythologising the New Testament preaching).¹ Bultmann's aim in "de-mythologising" the New Testament proclamation is to make it acceptable to modern man, who is compelled to reject the world view of the New Testament in favour of one that is more in accord with contemporary scientific knowledge. The attempt will be made in this article to analyse as clearly and simply as possible Bultmann's essay and then to draw out some of its implications.

Bultmann begins by stating that the view of the world (*weltbild*) of the New Testament is a mythical one. The world is seen as a three-decker affair: earth in the centre, the heaven above and the underworld underneath. The earth is not self-contained. It is the scene of supernatural activity; on the one hand, that of God and his angels; and on the other, that of Satan and the demons. History is controlled by supernatural powers, but it is fast hastening towards its end. This will soon come in the form of a cosmic catastrophe. In addition to this mythical view of the world, the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ is also mythically conceived. In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son. He is seen as a pre-existent being, who appears on the earth as a man. He dies the death of a sinner, and, by his death, makes atonement for men. The Resurrection of Jesus marks the beginning of the cosmic catastrophe. Death has been abolished and the demonic forces have been deprived of their power. Christ, who has been exalted at the right hand of God, will come again to complete the work of redemption.

¹ See the symposium on Bultmann's position in *Kerygma und Mythos* (Hamburg, 1948, 2nd ed. 1951) ed. H. W. Bartsch and also *Kerygma and Myth* (London, S.P.C.K., 1953).

That, says Bultmann, is the *kerygma*, the proclamation or preaching of the early church. The mythical framework in which it is set is entirely unacceptable to modern man. It is no longer possible for him to accept either the proclamation or the mythical world view. But, asks Bultman, has the proclamation a value apart from the mythical setting in which it is placed. He claims that it has. Therefore it is the work of theology to "de-mythologise" the Gospel: its task is to strip the proclamation of its mythical framework, and thus make it once again acceptable to modern man.

In this task there can be no half measures. Modern man has to deal very drastically with the New Testament mythology. One thing he cannot do, and that is to try to save it by subtraction or selection. He must either accept the mythology as a whole, or reject it as a whole. The logical conclusion of Bultmann's argument would seem to be that myth should be eliminated altogether from the New Testament. That, however, he denies; theology's true task is to *interpret* it. So what he means by de-mythologising the New Testament is really interpreting it, and in a modern idiom. The *elimination* of myth was the cardinal error of the older liberal theologians. They recognised the problem, but they went the wrong way in solving it. They eliminated myth, but in so doing they not only threw away the myth, they threw away the *kerygma*, the proclamation, also. The liberals regarded the great truths of religion as timeless and eternal; in Bultmann's terms, they "reduced" the *kerygma* to a few basic principles of religion and ethics. But the result of that was that the *kerygma* (proclamation) ceased to be *kerygma*; there was no longer any decisive act of God in Christ. That is one thing that Bultmann wishes to keep above all: the decisive act of God in Jesus Christ.

The recovery of the truth of the *kerygma*, for men who do not think mythologically, can only be done existentially, *i.e.*, psychologically. In the modern world, myth can only be interpreted anthropologically, *i.e.*, in terms of human destiny, not cosmologically, *i.e.*, in terms of cosmic destiny, as the New Testament does. Bultmann defines myth as the use of imagery to express the other-worldly in terms of this world, and the divine in terms of the human. If that is done cosmologically, in New Testament fashion, then the terms that are used only obscure the purpose of the myth (*e.g.*, ascending into heaven or descending into hell must be taken psychologically and not physically).

Now the myth of the New Testament, whether it has its source in Jewish apocalyptic or Hellenistic gnosticism, is an attempt to express man's understanding of his existence. A common feature of New Testament mythology is dualism. The present world with its inhabitants are under the control of demonic and Satanic forces and stand in need of redemption. The imagery in which this is expressed is out of date and useless; but the imagery is not the really significant thing. The significant thing is the understanding

of human existence which it is trying to express. This dualistic mythology must to-day be given an existentialist (or psychological) interpretation.

This can be done by applying to it the Christian interpretation of being. The New Testament sees life under two aspects. There is first human existence apart from faith. In this kind of existence man bases his life on the visible and the tangible, and becomes a prisoner of corruption. He becomes a prey to anxiety. But there is also human existence which is the life of faith. This is man's authentic life. It is a life based on the unseen and intangible realities. It involves the abandonment of self-centred security. It is life after the spirit (*kata pneuma*) as opposed to life after the flesh (*kata sarka*) which is life without faith. This faith is faith in the grace of God, and in the power of God to forgive sins, which will bring release from the past. It involves obedience; it means turning one's back on self and abandoning all security. That is the true eschatological existence. In this way, the eschatology of Jewish apocalyptic and Gnostic redemptionism is freed from the accompanying mythology.

Bultmann claims that the New Testament is only saying what the modern existentialists are saying. According to the existentialists (e.g., Heidegger), man exists in a state of constant tension. The chief characteristic of man's being is anxiety. But the difference between the New Testament and the existentialists lies here: the latter philosophers say that all that man needs is a true understanding of his being in order to realise it, whereas the New Testament says that man cannot redeem himself from a fallen state. That redemption can only come from an act of God, which has already taken place in history. The New Testament, therefore, does not teach a doctrine of the authentic nature of man; it proclaims an act of redemption that has been wrought through Jesus Christ. That was the only way in which redemption could be achieved, since man could not achieve redemption for himself owing to his fallen state.

Man can only achieve salvation, that is to say, attain to his true nature, by an act of self commitment. He is made capable of that act by God. That is the point of transition between the old life and the new. It centres round the Cross and the Resurrection. But the Cross bears a double aspect. It is, first of all, an event in history. It is the end of a human life that was lived on earth. Jesus Christ is an actual concrete figure in history whose life ends in crucifixion. But in the New Testament his death also bears a mythical aspect. In the myth, Jesus Christ is seen as the pre-existent, incarnate Son of God. It carries with it what Bultmann describes as a whole hotch-potch of sacrificial and judicial analogies. These have no value for us. What has value for us is what they are trying to tell us. And what they are trying to tell us is that the Cross is not a mythical event but a permanent historical fact which

originates in the historical event of the Cross of Christ. Here Bultmann makes a subtle distinction between two German words which may or may not bear all the meaning he gives to them. He says that they will express the double aspect of the Cross. In so far as the Cross is an historical event like any other, which the historian can establish as a fact, it is *historisch*, i.e., historical. In so far as it is an event of decisive importance for our lives to-day in that it created a new and permanent situation in history, it is *geschichtlich*, i.e., historic. This is the eschatological sense of the Cross. It comes through the Resurrection. But the Resurrection is not an historical event like the Crucifixion. It is something that came only through the experience of the disciples. All the historian can do is to establish that the disciples came to believe in the Resurrection. The Resurrection is an article of faith, incapable of proof. The only way that men can apprehend the truth of the Gospel is not by an appeal to history, but through personal experience. The truth of the Gospel is essentially existential or psychological.

That, so far as the writer can understand it, is Bultmann's solution of the difficulties of presenting the Gospel to the modern world. Bultmann claims that his interpretation has two advantages: (1) It secures the essential truth of the New Testament message; (2) It emancipates it from myth, or at any rate, from the wrong kind of myth—the myth of Jewish apocalyptic and Hellenistic gnosticism.

In attempting to assess the value of Bultmann's contribution we may begin by admitting that his approach to the historical problem of Christianity is a valid one. He recognises that it was not the Jesus of History who set in motion the forces that led to the rise of the Christian Church. There was the Jesus who lived, taught, worked and died in Palestine; there is also the impact that he made on history, and the interpretation of his life and work that men have made for themselves. Both are important, but in some senses the latter is more important than the former. It was fashionable once to speak of the Jesus of History *or* the Theological Christ. That is a distinction which it is hardly possible to make clearly. There is the fact and there is the interpretation. The interpretation began long before the compilation of the records that became our Four Gospels. The theology of the Cross is an apt example. The Cross does bear a double aspect, even if the German words that Bultmann uses cannot sustain all the implications that he draws from them. It is a concrete event in history. But it is more than that. There is all the meaning that the Cross has come to have for us. It is an event that has an importance for our lives to-day. We may not, for instance, agree with the concepts and the language that the Apostle Paul uses to express his conviction that the Cross of Christ is a manifestation of God's love having redemptive power, but we may still share the conviction and find in it inspiration for the religious life. When the permanent significance of the Cross is

expressed, the New Testament uses mythological language. It is not difficult to see the reason for this. An event that comes to have more than a prosaic historical meaning must be expressed in other terms, because it is an expression of another aspect of reality. For this the New Testament uses imagery, but an imagery that Bultmann regards as out of date and useless, what he calls a hotch-potch of judicial and sacrificial terminology. The need is for a myth, or a re-interpretation of myth, that will satisfy modern man.

Because religion is concerned with supra-sensible realities, this mythical or symbolical language has to be used. Bultmann's own definition of myth, as we have seen, is that it is the expression of the other-worldly in terms of this world, the divine in terms of the human, the transcendent in terms of the immanent. As one of his critics in the de-mythologising controversy has said,² "if that is what myth means, then mythology is the form of all religion." It is the language in which it is expressed. To de-mythologise a religious proclamation, of whatever kind, is to condemn every religion to silence and therefore to destroy it. Mythical, symbolical or imaginative language is necessary to all religions, Christian or other.

There is a sense in which every generation of Christians will interpret the historical Jesus according to its own experience. Therefore it cannot help but be influenced by the prevailing intellectual and spiritual climate and by the contemporary culture. That is no less true of Bultmann himself than it is of anyone else. He is clearly influenced by existentialist philosophy. Yet this conception, though it seems to speak so vividly to our situation and condition, can be seen to be defective. Existentialist philosophy is concerned with man. It aims at an understanding of human existence as men experience it. But does it in fact cover all human experience? Is man's experience limited to this world and to this life? Does it indeed point to nothing beyond it, as a philosophy such as Heidegger's would imply? Are there not in our experience intimations of another world, an order of being that transcends our own, faith in which gives meaning to our existence? To express this aspect of experience an existentialist myth seems quite inadequate. The New Testament conception is not concerned with man alone but with God. That is why a myth or an imagery that ignores the transcendental aspect of man's experience must be regarded as defective. Bultmann might argue that to pray "Our Father who art in heaven" is a confession of faith that depends upon a three storied universe of earth, heaven and hell. But are we to dispense with it for that reason? It still expresses for us the idea of transcendence which is part of our religious experience. We are aware that it is imagery, or symbolism, or if the term is preferred, a myth, but it means something that it would be very difficult to express in

² Ernst Lohmeyer. *Kerygma und Mythos*, p.140.

another way. Simply by calling God "Father" Jesus said something that might be described as expressing the other-worldly in terms of this world, but it still has a wealth of meaning for us, as it had for him, and if we eliminated it, our faith would be immeasurably poorer. Some might like to follow Theodore Parker's example and make the symbol more adequate by calling God "Our Father and Mother," but it is none the less a symbol. Another of Bultmann's critics has emphasised this point.³ He takes the familiar saying of *Matthew xviii*, 10: "I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my father which is in heaven." He maintains that Jesus could not have said that in any other language without altering its whole character and meaning. If the saying is "de-mythologised" by removing the angels, nothing is done to elucidate its meaning. In fact, the meaning would be completely destroyed.

It is impossible, therefore, to de-mythologise religion. There cannot be a Gospel free from myth. Provided we recognise its nature, there is no need to abolish a myth because it happens to be based on an out-moded cosmology. The supra-sensible realities of religion can only be expressed in pictorial symbolic language of some kind. Whether "myth" is a suitable term for this process is another though important matter. The difficulty with the use of the word "myth" is that it has been used with so many different meanings throughout the centuries. Plato used myths or stories as a means of conveying the truth of certain ideas. They were not meant to hide the truth but by poetic or pictorial language to enable it to be grasped more clearly. On the other hand Auguste Comte understood by mythological thought a primitive pre-scientific interpretation of the universe. Myth was something which, like religion, proved useful in the early stages of man's thought and development but had no place in a world where science provided the master key to reality. Then there is the popular use of the word myth which in itself has had a very long innings. A myth is something that has no foundation in fact and therefore has no value; it is something to be "exploded." A *Manchester Guardian* headline runs: "Mr. Dulles revives a myth" and in its editorial columns it is demolished. This is the sense in which it is used in the New Testament itself. The writer of the *First Epistle to Timothy* warns his readers not to give heed to fables (*muthois*) and endless genealogies.⁴ To speak to the ordinary man of the Resurrection as a Christian myth might very well be to encourage him to dismiss it as a conception that no longer has value. The unsuitability of the term is to be noted by those who would endeavour to 'get across' the truth that lies behind it. They must be extremely careful in defining their terms or they will be completely misunderstood. Alternatively, they must seek some other term, such as "metaphor"

³ Friedrich Schumann. *Kerygma und Mythos*, pp.200-1.

⁴ *I Timothy* i, 4.

or "symbol," as when, for instance, a sermon is preached on the Temptation of Jesus, and it is described as a metaphorical or symbolic interpretation of an inward experience.

Still using the term "myth," though recognising its limitations, a crucial question remains to be discussed. If it is impossible to do without mythology, then what myths are relevant and what are not? We are compelled to seek some kind of criterion for the use of myth. In this matter it is to be noted that there is a cardinal difference between myth as it issues from the New Testament, and other forms of mythology: here it issues from an historical figure. Can it be detached entirely from that historical figure. Not, we would suggest, without placing Christianity in grave peril of disintegration. That was the result of the biblical criticism of Strauss. Strauss believed that religion was based not upon facts but upon ideas; therefore it did not matter whether the Gospel records in which those religious ideas were expressed were historical or not. It did not even matter whether Jesus Christ, as an historical figure, existed or not. That was to give Jesus (or Christ) the same place in the Christian religion which, for instance, Dionysus held in the Hellenistic myth. Dionysus, too, was a god who died and rose again, but he had no existence whatsoever as an historical figure.

Myth, in the Christian religion, cannot be detached from the historical figure who is the founder of that religion, and it must express the meaning of the Historical Jesus for human experience. If that is a true criterion, then we are compelled to do what Bultmann tells us we cannot do; we must select our myths. The Christian religion was made through the interpretation of men of their experience of Jesus. There is the story and the interpretation as well as the fact; if there had been no story, and no interpretation of the experience, then there might not have been remembrance of the fact. But are all interpretations equally valid, and equally permanent? The criterion that is suggested here can be applied to two Christian doctrines, one of which, the Resurrection, is based upon human experience—the experience of the first disciples—in a sense that the second, the Virgin Birth, certainly is not. In considering the relative worth of these "myths" or "symbols" of Christian truth, we cannot ignore the findings of the historical criticism of the Gospels. Throughout the whole of the New Testament, there are only two or three texts in admittedly late sections of the records that assume the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Large tracts of the New Testament do not know it at all; it is unknown to the Apostle Paul; in fact, he makes statements that expressly exclude any such idea as a Virgin Birth. The Resurrection (though not of the body), on the other hand, is the universal experience that we find throughout the New Testament, which gave rise to the Christian Church. Many would agree that it was that, more than the memory of the teaching of Jesus, which gave it birth. Nevertheless, it rested upon a living experience, and it was after-

wards that the experience came to have a mythical or symbolical expression; and it is important to note that that expression is not everywhere the same.

Without taking the matter any further, here may be found the criterion, or the kind of criterion, that can be applied to the use of myth or symbol. Christian myth is not the same as the Hellenistic myths, against which it had to fight, and which it ultimately conquered. For it was rooted in an historical experience, in a way that the Hellenistic and Gnostic myths were not. Myth must be a true reflection of human experience, of every aspect of human experience, and it must speak to every age. And no myth will be true to Christianity that does not express the transcendental aspects of human experience. This is a condition that may well expose the inadequacy of much current existentialist thinking.

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PROGRESS

There are no steady hands.
Around stand giants who thunder
Unintelligible sounds, watching
The first totter in a world-wide room.

Unable to sustain
That universe of terror, the child
Falls howling in the dirt, afraid;
And yet, the first step has been made.

The child can not control
The carpet's pattern, understand
The furniture; he wants to hold
The bright bowls on the shelf too soon
And falling sobs, frustrate, afraid;
But yet, the first step has been made.

P. J. HELM

The word "Lord" *and its use in Unitarian Services*

HERBERT CRABTREE

VISITORS to Unitarian churches are sometimes arrested by slight differences in the preacher's terminology as compared with the common usage in more orthodox churches. Especially are they likely to find a difference in the preacher's references to the person of Jesus. He will probably tend to use the name Jesus rather more frequently than the term Christ, and the word "Lord" much less than is usual in other churches. Occasionally, though not usually, the latter term may not be used at all. The reason for this reticence is not due to any unnecessary theological pedantry, still less to an irrational desire to be different from others; it springs rather from a legitimate desire not to add to the confusion which so often results from a loose use of terms that have very varied meanings. It is not an exaggeration to say that millions of devoted Christians have been misled by ignorance on this matter, and the subject is eminently one calling for clarification. Little need be said about the use of the word Christ; a brief comment on it later will be sufficient. The word "Lord," however, presents greater difficulties, and its explanation is far from simple.

The use of the term is, of course, derived from the Bible, and difficulty at once arises when it is realised that the word as used in the Old Testament is markedly different from its general use in the New. For instance, the familiar Mosaic benediction, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee . . ." (*Numbers vi*, 24), has, and can have, no reference whatsoever to the person of Jesus, as a moment's reflection will clearly show; and it is far too beautiful in its phrasing and too hallowed in its associations for it to be allowed to fall into disuse merely because of a possible misunderstanding. In neither Testament, however, is there just one clear and simple meaning which can be agreed upon for every occasion when the word is used.

Let us consider the Old Testament first. There the word is often used to translate the Hebrew *adon*, which primarily meant ruler or commander, and sometimes the master of a slave. At times it was used to express an attitude of respect or courtesy when addressing a superior. But very many times, about 130 in all, the word is used in the plural form *adoni* (literally, 'my lords,' the plural implying the ascription of majesty) when referring to the God of Israel. When the proper name of God, which we now translate *Yahweh* (formerly *Jehovah*, a form not known prior to the 16th century A.D.) came to be regarded with supreme awe—the "ineffable name"—it was indicated by the scribes in their texts by

the consonants JHVH, the so-called Tetragrammaton, and when the word had to be spoken, as in the reading of the Scriptures in public worship, these consonants were combined with the vowel-sounds of *adhoni*, from which practice the word Jehovah was derived. This is now almost universally discarded, as quite definitely a mistaken translation.

The Old Testament came into use among the early Christians not in its original Hebrew text, which even by that time had become somewhat conjectural and was certainly not known by the common people, Hebrew having ceased to be a living language, but through the Greek translation known as the Septuagint. This translation was made in Alexandria about 250 B.C. for the use of Greek-speaking Jews, of whom there were great numbers in the Mediterranean world in the late B.C. period. The scribes were presented with a serious difficulty when they came to translate the Hebrew proper name of God (JHVH, or *Yahweh*), for which they had no adequate Greek equivalent, so they fell back upon the Greek word *kurios*, meaning 'lord,' another term the usages of which were both numerous and complex. Thus it was that amongst these Greek-speaking Jews, the word *kurios* became the usual designation of the God of Israel. It was never, however, regarded by the Jews as a synonym for the word Messiah (the "anointed one"), who was never thought of as other than a created being, never the Creator Himself.

It is not surprising that confusion should arise in the minds of readers of our English versions, where *Kurios*—lord—is used in both Testaments, in the Old for *Yahweh*, and in the New for Christ, but those who read carefully need not be misled. Where it is used in the Old as a substitute for the name of God it will be seen that its English translation, Lord, is printed in small capital letters in both the Authorised and the Revised Versions. The preface to the latter version should be read in this connection.

The full story is, of course, more complicated than this, and no doubt advanced scholars may find something to cavil about in this highly summarised treatment, though not, one hopes, seriously so. In any case, some such knowledge as this is essential if confusion is not to become worse confounded, as it has alas! been in countless commentaries and expositions, to say nothing of innumerable sermons and the often ill-informed language of popular preaching.

Now let us pass on to the New Testament. From the beginning the Christian Church adopted the Greek Septuagint as its Old Testament text, and as the New Testament also was written entirely in Greek, it was inevitable that many terms in the former should influence the usage of the same terms in the latter, in some instances with striking consequences. This word Lord (*Kurios*) was a striking case in point. Not only had this word been chosen to translate the name of *Yahweh* in the Septuagint, but it has perhaps as great a variety of meanings and applications in the Greek-speaking world

as it has amongst us to-day. Reference to a Greek and an English dictionary will at once make this clear; *e.g.*, master, ruler, sovereign, and so forth, are given in both. Also, in both cases it will be seen that upon occasion supernatural beings are indicated as being similarly addressed. The context of the word is as important for its proper understanding as is the use of the word itself. Sometimes, when applied to Jesus in the New Testament, it implies a highly exalted reference (*e.g.*, *Phil. ii*, 11), at others, quite a common, almost an everyday one. Dr. Vincent Taylor in his recently published work on *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, suggests that the word in *Mark xi*, 3, means "the owner" or "the boss"!

The word Christ may be glanced at here. Though at first this was a rather loose translation of the word Messiah, it came in the Pauline Epistles to be used as though it were a proper name, as it is generally used to-day. "This is a curious illustration of the extent to which the words of the Septuagint were not really intelligible in Greek-speaking synagogues," writes Kirsopp Lake, who also points out that "Lord" (*Kurios*) was probably at times the Greek rendering of the Aramaic *mar*, which is preserved in the phrase "Maran atha" (*I Cor. xvi*, 22), and also that "Lord" in Greek sacramental cults is the title of their supernatural head, of which there were many. Thus, Osiris was a god, but was "Lord" only to those who were initiated members of his cult. To Greek minds, to claim that Jesus was Lord would imply that he was the head of a sacramental cult whose initiates accepted him as Lord. To the Jews, God, or Yahweh (*Kurios* in the Septuagint) was the Supreme Being, the Creator, but to the Greek the same word *Kurios* denoted a whole class of supernatural beings more closely resembling the angels of Hebrew thought than God in either the Hebrew or the modern sense. The comment of Kirsopp Lake on this fact is very illuminating:—"Whereas to the Gentile world there were many gods and many lords, to the Christian there was but one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ. One of the puzzles in the exegesis of the Epistles is the exact distinction between those words in the mind of Paul, but it seems at least not improbable that the word Lord became popular in Gentile Christian circles because there was no adequate rendering for the Aramaic word Messiah. Christ, its verbal equivalent, became a proper name, and the word Lord took its place, and was interpreted in the light of its connotations in Greek religions." And, it may be added, the use of the same word for Yahweh in the Septuagint led to the further confusion as to the relationship between the Lord God and the Lord Jesus Christ which has embarrassed theological disputation ever since.

The problem is obviously one of real complexity, but for us it can be resolved into the simple question as to what principle should govern our own use of the word. Shall we use it or not? Unhesitatingly we may say yes, when our reference carries with it an attitude of adoration and reverence, as surely it often should, and

actually does. Why should we discard a term solely because it may mean different things to different minds and in different contexts? If we are to be governed by that principle we should have to discard so many terms (including even the word God itself!) that devotional thought and utterance would become well nigh impossible.

As to the use of the familiar benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ . . ." *II Cor. xiii*, 14, the judgment of James Drummond in his invaluable little book *The Pauline Benediction* is unassailable: "This is the earliest literary expression of the great religious thoughts which underlie the doctrine of the Trinity. In this undogmatic form they are the common property of Christendom, of the Unitarian no less than of the Trinitarian. . . The love of God and the fellowship of the Spirit were folded, as it were, in the grace of Christ, and it was through this that they were brought home to the hearts of the disciples and made living realities within them." There is no peculiar virtue in the use of one form of words for all occasions to express the richness and diversity of religious experience and belief. Variation at times is desirable, and especially so in those services at which worshippers from many different communions may be present, such as weddings and funerals, when it is desirable that the basic principles and common aspirations of the religious life, rather than sectarian differences, should be stressed. At such times the true catholicity of liberal religion may well be exemplified by the use of this three fold benediction. No compromise is involved for any who, in any sense whatsoever, acknowledge Jesus as Lord. A word so varied in meaning, yet so reverent in its associations, should not be discarded by those who value comprehensiveness in religious fellowship.

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GROWING OLD

Age has made beautiful the rough gruff men.
 Their vegetable loves and hates have grown
 As brightly coloured lichens over stone
 Give to a building character, breaking
 The smooth planes, the sharp relief, making
 A fresh fortuitous pattern: you can see
 That beauty in the profile of a tree,
 A jetty's timbers, the red rust that burns
 The farmer's corrugated barns and turns
 Deserted workings to a painted stage.

The rough gruff men share beauty in their age. P. J. HELM

Religious Implications of John Dewey's Philosophy

GERALD WEARY A.B., B.D.

Part I.—NATURALISTIC METAPHYSICS*

Life is Precarious and Full of the Possibilities of Tragedy

"We are here concerned with the fact that it is the intricate mixture of the stable and the precarious, the fixed and the unpredictably novel, the assured and the uncertain, in existence which sets mankind upon that love of wisdom which forms philosophy."

—JOHN DEWEY, *Experience and Nature*, p.59

WE read that as Jesus passed by "he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither did this man sin, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.'" In other words, and in our language, Jesus was saying that a world in which blindness could not occur would be unthinkable. Why this man rather than another should be born blind is one of these evils resulting from the precariousness of life; we know that in responding to concrete evils of this kind Jesus responded with compassion and considerateness. But here, in talking with his disciples, Jesus dealt with a consideration of the problem that still escapes most people. It is that we should refrain from passing final judgment upon a concrete evil like blindness until we have viewed it in the context of a vast network of connections. Once we acquired the habit of doing this we should find ourselves responding to concrete evil in the same spirit as James H. Breasted, who, stricken with acute arthritis, wrote: "But then I look up at the driving autumn clouds and am filled with peace and with wonder and gratitude that I have been given a place in this marvellous universe, where I can at least pick up a few pebbles and pluck a flower here and there. If I suffer, it is only by virtue of those cunning laws without which the whole world would be unthinkable. Whatever happens I am ready to bow my head and give thanks."

What is true of concrete evils like blindness and acute arthritis is also true of concrete evils like destructive winds. The same air which as wind destroys our houses is the air that purifies our blood and feeds the brain. Deprive a man's brain of oxygen, even if for

*Two further parts will be published in subsequent issues: Part 2, 'Some moral and religious implications of Dewey's concept of the end-means continuum'; and Part 3, 'Some religious implications of Dewey's theory of Art.' The whole paper was read to the Greenfield Group in November 1953.

only a minute or two, and the man's personality suffers permanent damage. And although the activity of air as wind may conflict with our wishes we may find that by an intelligent relating of the two, via the boat's sail, for example, we may become partners in a joint activity. And although we may find it impossible to relate ourselves productively to the winds of storms, we nonetheless find that within a larger context of connections—of parched land, sunshine, rain, and growing things—they are creative, not destructive, without whose operations the world as we know it could not exist.

But we have not adequately stated man's predicament in the universe, until we have drawn attention to the traits of existence. The moment we mention the traits of existence we find ourselves in the field of metaphysics, concerning which a thousand and one tomes have been written (which few persons other than professional philosophers have read). One of these is John Dewey's *Experience and Nature* which Mr. Justice Holmes, one of the few who read books of this kind, confessed having read several times. "It came nearest," he said, "to expressing 'the cosmic wiggle' of any book I know." "So, me-thought, God would have spoken had He been . . . keenly desirous to tell you how it was."

One of the central ideas of John Dewey's work is that any honest survey of existence will reveal nature as a mixture on the one hand of the relatively stable, the relatively enduring, the relatively dependable and, on the other hand, of the precarious, the transitory, the unpredictable, the incomplete. It will reveal that every object of existence is a dynamic event, a process, a changing situation that comes, has its day and goes; that even those emblems of constancy, the mountains "appear and disappear like the clouds," and that the atom, regarded from ancient times as fixed and unchanging, is actually only "a temporary equilibrium in the economy of nature's compromises and adjustments." It is true that processes present traits of stability and endurance but this stability and endurance is the dynamic stability and endurance of forces in equilibrium. Again, it is true that they have structure, without which no event would be identifiable, but structure is not the "ghostly queerness" concerning which much nonsense has been written, but rather, like the structure of a house, "an arrangement of changing events such that properties which change slowly, limit and direct a series of quick changes and give them an order which they do not otherwise possess." Again, it is true that some processes support one another in marvellous unities, like the varied, co-ordinated processes of the human organism. But in the overall picture we do not find that the events and processes of nature mutually sustain one another in a single unity. Some support one another; others clash. Some sustain man; others destroy him. They are not unified.

Through science we do achieve a measure of control over these processes. By clocking their relative velocities and accelera-

tions, by establishing ratios of comparative change, by using the more stable and enduring variants as constants in dealing with the more transitory occurrences and happenings of life, we find we can make more secure our abode on earth. And yet it is fantastic to think that men will ever know enough to eliminate the hazardous, the unpredictable, the problematic, from their existence. It is fantastic to think that they will ever achieve power enough to unify the processes of the universe into one grand unity, to render the infinite the finite, the incomplete the complete, the invisible the visible. The precarious is an inseparable element of life. Like the tares of the parable we shall not be able to separate it from the wheat until the day of harvest.

In their pathetic longing for unity, order and peace, men have formulated all sorts of philosophical recipes for denying the reality of contingency. For one and for all, the fixed, the orderly, the finished, is the real, while the vicissitudes and flux of life are the unreal. What these men have overlooked is the significant fact that if the traits of nature which we have described are the source of all men's troubles and perplexities, they are also the source of all men's good luck and unexpected joys. For when we come down to it we shall have to admit that the problem of good is every bit as real and as hard to explain as the problem of evil; that it is the egoism of the human heart that causes men to take the goods of life for granted as if they were their just deserts, and prevents them from recognising that the existence of these goods equally constitutes a problem.

Actually the problem of evil and the problem of good are intermixed and cannot be separated. In both we find the same precariousness, the same unpredictability, the same transitoriness, that characterise all existence. If those traits sometimes result in tragedy, they also give us unexpected and unmerited joy. If they bring us sorrow, they also bring us the consolation that no evil lasts forever. Is this a blessing or a curse? Or is it both? And would we have it otherwise?

Do we realise, in asking these questions, that apart from these traits of nature there would be no consciousness? It is the immediate crises, the immediate focal points of need, the immediate deviations and changes of our environment, that bring us to full consciousness; whereas withdrawal from the course of events results in drowsiness and sleep. Consciousness may be compared to toothache, which "is notoriously a matter of throbs, pulsations, palpitations, waxings and wanings of intensity, of organic protests and temporary deviations, and of enforced returns—of flights and perchings." Apart from the precarious, the problematic, the sudden changes and stresses of the environment, the flickering candle of consciousness would go out.

Asking whether we would have life otherwise, do we realise that apart from the precarious there would be no thinking, no philosophy, no science? For it is the problematic, the confused, the

uncertain, that sets us thinking, to searching, to investigating, to weighing of alternatives, to experimenting. Do we realise that apart from the incomplete, the unstable, the precarious, there would be no ideals to pursue? For a world in which everything is complete and finished is a world that just *is*, a world without possibilities, an end in itself. Nor would there be any desires, any aspirations, any longings of the human heart. For it is the incompleteness, the partialities, the defections, the losses, the perishableness of life, that call them into being and give them force.

Again, apart from the precarious, the hazardous, the incomplete, there would be no aesthetic experience. For aesthetic experience is the experience of resistance and the efforts to overcome resistance, carried to triumph or tragic defeat. Nor, apart from hardship, risk, and achievement, would there be any festal celebrations. For in a complete and finished world there would be nothing to achieve and hence to celebrate; the world would just be, and would be flat and insipid, without power to satisfy, move or inspire. Again, apart from the precarious, the transitory, the perishable, there would be no such thing as time. It is beginnings and endings, births and deaths, the less enduring in its relation to the more enduring, that create time. Without them there would be timelessness—a stagnant, absolutely uninteresting nothing.

The world in which we live is not chaos; it has its elements of comparative stability, without which there would be nothing to get hold of and work with; and yet, without an admixture of the precarious with the comparatively stable, it would be a world without consciousness, without thought, without ideals, without desires and aspirations, without aesthetic experience and festal celebrations, without satisfying achievement, and, yes, without tragedy, for whatever else may be said about tragedy, it does at least impart dignity and interest to life.

Nor is this all. For we should realise that when we ask for a world in which precariousness is abolished we are asking for a world which would be deprived of the essentials which make up character and holiness. I am not only thinking that the kind of world in which we live imposes upon us liability for the choices we make, solidly important though that is. I am also thinking of the fact that it is a world which makes possible a life of courage, of fidelity, of spiritual self-possession. It is all very well to say that these qualities are important only because of the kind of world in which we live. That is true but not the whole story. For one thing, although these qualities are important because of the particular kind of world in which we live, it also happens to be a world in which we can, if we choose, be cowardly instead of courageous, disloyal instead of loyal, spiritually dissociated instead of spiritually whole, so that the mere acquisition of them becomes a satisfying achievement. For another thing, it must be realised that the peace, the unity, the self-possession, which the critics of our world long for, can be found, not in a world

of illusion, but in and through the turmoil of life. They are found in those persons who are still at their post, with the light burning, despite hardship, sorrow, and defeat.

What is true of character is no less true of divinity. Whether we know it or not, whenever we participate in activities which in character, are truth-seeking, love-creating, and justice-demanding, we are participating in the divine. I believe I am not far wrong in saying that our interaction with one another and with nature in the progressive realisation of ideal ends is deity itself. Obviously it is only in a world of incompleteness, of risk, and of uncertainty, that a diety of this kind can exist, or that we ourselves can experience holiness.

Says the wife, in Robert Frost's poem *A Masque of Reason*:

"Job says there's no such thing as Earth's becoming
An easier place for man to save his soul in.
Except as a hard place to save his soul in,
A trial ground where he can try himself
And find out whether he is any good,
It would be meaningless. It might as well
Be Heaven at once and have it over with."

I would agree with Job. The world is a hard place to live in but he only will quarrel with it who has made "the mistake of thinking it is heaven—or should have been."

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Observations on Reading Emerson

ERNEST SOMERFELD B.A., B.D.

Who telleth one of my meanings
Is master of all I am.

(*The Sphinx*: EMERSON)

RALPH Waldo Emerson was a reflective man and wrote as one, which probably explains why a non-reflective age finds him difficult to read. Emerson did not belong to the fraternity that lectures with one eye on the manuscript and the other eye on the clock, nor did he write as one with the frontal lobes concentrated on the deadline, and what was left of the brain concentrated on his subject. Modern readers who have acquired the habit of scanning and skip-reading grow impatient with Emerson because he will not be rushed or hurried. His own reflective nature took him away from

crowds and it is said that, while he was democratic in principle, he had a dislike for crowds, streets and hotels, and he explained that the people oppressed him with excessive civility. Emerson, like the Galilean teacher, says to us, "Come ye apart unto a desert place the rest awhile," and so we find it difficult to read him between committee meetings.

Emerson lived life first-hand with nature, and modern people who accept second-hand living may find him difficult to understand. Imagine a clergyman to-day standing before a graduation class anticipating communication with them by speaking as Emerson did to divinity students, and you can see the smiles on their faces as they become certain that this is a clever joke whose punch line will send them into gales of laughter. Second-hand it is a joke, but first-hand it is life:

"In this refulgent summer it has been a luxury to draw the breath of life. The grass grows, the buds burst, the meadow is spotted with fire and gold in the tint of flowers. The air is full of birds, and sweet with the breath of pine, the Balm-of-Gilead and the new hay."

Emerson's long argument is that life should be lived first-hand and here he unwittingly, but nicely, illustrates his own argument. He talked about nature with no self-consciousness because he experienced its mystery and beauty first-hand—"how wide, how rich." Not the unusual but the usual, not the miraculous but the natural, not the glamorous but the commonplace makes nature "wide and rich."

There is still another reason why Emerson remains unknown to us, a seemingly paradoxical reason, which is that he is so easily framed. A more quotable man never wrote and so we meet Emerson everywhere wrenched out of context, the result being that many people know something that Emerson said while comparatively few know what Emerson meant. Many of his readers read with an eye for the sharp phrase and the quotable sentence and fail to digest his argument, which, after all, is Emerson.

One anecdote should be sufficient to point out how well known and how little understood Emerson is. James Thurber tells us that his grandfather Fisher, whose hobby was entertaining ministers at Sunday dinner, would not invite Washington Gladden, the Congregationalist, to his home because he held Gladden suspect, not for being a Congregationalist, but for being an intellectual. William Fisher neatly explained: "I go to church to hear the word of God, not the word of Emerson." One would not ordinarily expect to find such fine sentiments from a man who kept a bottle of rye close at hand with the explanation to the females of the house that it was rubbing alcohol for his bowels. The William Fishers are numerous as every clergyman knows who has sought to find the "Word of God" in other places beside the Bible. If they understood Emerson they would rise to a new faith which says

that God does not live in the Bible or in any institution and is no more dependent upon the Bible than the law of gravity is dependent upon a book by Newton. Emerson had a sounder faith because he had a closer evidence and did not need to go back 1900 years for the proof-texts of his faith.

The first time that it is suggested to a casual reader of Emerson that he study Emerson with a view to discovering his system of thought the reaction is apt to be that it is nonsense to suggest that the philosopher had a system of thought. See, for instance, what he says about consistency! Yet nearly everything that Emerson wrote illustrated his system of thought, and even what he has to say about consistency is on behalf of that system. It would be difficult to find a man more consistent than Emerson.

He lived, as he saw it, in a universe of absolutes and worshipped an absolute God. God is absolute goodness, absolute truth, absolute justice, absolute love, absolute beauty. Apart from this absolute there is no life, but only death. Evil is negation of this absolute and goodness is its affirmation. A man has just so much life as he has goodness. "This homely life we play," he said, "covers, under what seem foolish details, principles that astonish." Again, "The dice are loaded; the colours are fast . . . the globe is a battery : . . every atom is a magnet; . . . the policy and sincerity of the Universe are secured by God's delegating every particle; . . . there is no room for hypocrisy, no margin for choice." "Nature," he says, "is not democratic . . . but despotic and will not be fooled or abated one jot of her authority." Everything that Emerson writes as far as I have read is consistent with this system of thought.

The pronouncement of the absolute has had some fearful consequences in our world and it is interesting to see how Emerson avoided these consequences, and why he did not become an authoritarian like most believers in absolutes. As we know, the teacher of absolutes is often a convenient tool for the political dictator and for the religious authoritarian and yet none of these have found it possible to use Emerson for their purpose. Belief in the absolute has a way of destroying individualism, for the individual is nothing more than a carbuncle on the surface of the system, to be excommunicated or purged when he deviates from the line. By contrast, Emerson's absolute is the everlasting enemy of the authoritarian and the eternal champion of individualism. On the surface it might seem that there is a monumental inconsistency here which is much more than the "hobgoblin of little minds."

An Absolute must rest upon an authority, for only by way of an authority can an absolute be known. Here is where the danger comes into the picture because it is but one careless step from a belief in absolute goodness to an absolute ethics which, as Erich Fromm says: "holds that ethical propositions are unquestionably and eternally true and neither permit nor warrant revision." How short that step really is may be demonstrated by the individual who,

observing that you do not accept an absolute ethic, then assumes that you are in all things a relativist who has, of course, rejected all absolutes.

The Absolute must have its authority and when we see where Emerson found his authority we understand something of his system of thought. We are acquainted with the individual who humbly confesses that he is not an authority on the subject on hand, but who, notwithstanding that he is absolutely correct, proceeds to make his absolute statements. This is a psychological phenomenon rather than a doctrinal position. Where, then, shall we turn for authority? We discover that a good doctor is more cautious in diagnosis and treatment than the collector of household remedies.

There are many instructors who would gladly guide us to their absolutes and they are not newly arrived on the scene like television's latest comedian, but are dressed in the long and sombre robes of tradition. You know them well. They are, the religious hierarchy, priests of a system that holds the keys to heaven. They win to themselves the grief-stricken, the lonely, the fearful, the confused and unhappy ex-spy, the daughter of a Baptist minister, the columnist of a metropolitan newspaper. They can discern the ascendance of a physical body into heaven 1900 years after the event and if they cannot, they do what is equally miraculous, they believe those who say that they can discern such things.

The Evangelist is another instructor of the absolute and he holds God's word in his hand in the form of a book and can quote God directly. He can give life in this world and in the world to come, but deny him, and you are cast into the outer darkness. On the political scene the dictator can make absolute pronouncements—final and infallible on any subject—race religion, economics, history, biology, or what you will. Since these authoritarians are not new on the scene it might seem that the holes in their absolutes might be recognised from afar, and sometimes they are, but close at hand they rule with the ruthlessness of a system that is born of power and the knowledge that their absolutes are false and will survive only as long as power can enforce their acceptance.

To these absolutes Emerson bears no affinity and, for them, no responsibility. He does not find authority for the absolute in a system, religious or political, nor in a book, secular or divine, nor in any institution or historic person, as Christianity does. Emerson turns to the place from which all these others turn away, to the individual, and finds his authority there. Emerson turns to himself and instructs everyone that he must do likewise and find the authority within. In doing so he affirms his belief in an absolute while the others unwittingly affirm their disbelief.

Others must rely on force, fear, threats, excommunications and purges on behalf of the absolute, precisely because there is no absolute to enforce itself. Here we observe among the pretences to the absolute the case of the lady who "doth protest too much,"

a psychological phenomenon illustrated also by the theist who is over-wrought by people reluctant to announce their belief in God and by atheists over-wrought by people who are reluctant to announce their disbelief in God.

Emerson says that "The solar system has no anxiety about its reputation, and the credit of truth and honesty is as safe . . ." "Men talk . . . as if to say, 'poor God, with nobody to help him'." "The true doctrine of omnipresence is that God reappears with all his parts in every moss and cobweb." And so Emerson could dip his pen into the blackest ink because, as he said, he was not afraid of falling into the inkpot. "I have no infirmity of faith," he declared.

The political and religious systems which claim an absolute do not dare to put their absolutes to the real test, yet they maintain them in order to give their consciences at least that much right to use power over others.

Will not the individual, then, be led astray or misuse Emerson's theory of the absolute? He is not given a chance to do so because Emerson's system of thought makes it clear that while the absolute exists there can be no absolute knowledge of it. There is no infallible man, book, or institution and we are duly warned, "The absolute truths that are announced are speedily dragged down into a savage interpretation . . . King Olaf's mode (methodology) of converting Eyvind to Christianity was to put a pan of glowing coals on his belly, which burst asunder. 'Wilt thou now, Eyvind, believe in Christ?' asks Olaf, in excellent faith."

No such savage interpretation is possible to the individual who recognises that he never has more than a glimpse and glimmer of the absolute and must remain a non-conformist and even inconsistent with himself in order that to-morrow he may be able to see a glimmer that he did not see to-day. But he will never get it all or get it into a fixed symbol. "All symbols are fluxional; all language is vehicular and transitive. . . Mysticism consists in the mistake of an accidental and individual symbol for a universal one."

What sane man would presume to lay his hands upon and write down the Law? We owe to the Hindu Scriptures a definition of Law. "Law it is which is without name, or colour, or hands, or feet; which is smallest of the least, and largest of the large; all, and knowing all things; which hears without ears, sees without eyes, moves without feet, seizes without hands." "Whither shall I go from thy presence?" is how the Psalmist expressed it. There is no escape, no compromise, no deception, and "no margin for choice." Nor need there be for it is not our enemy but our friend and "our rightful lord."

Someone has remarked that it is not tragic that men die but that so many die without having lived. If Emerson was troubled about people not experiencing life first-hand in his time, we wonder what he would say of a culture where living has become increasingly second-hand. Men at machines fashioning pieces of plastic or metal

without even knowing their use, crowds sitting in darkened movie houses, now at last to have life brought to them in the third dimension from the screen because they have lost their way and no longer live in the third dimension, America's families clutter before television sets when they are not lined up bumper to bumper in the highway or waiting in long queues in the impersonal Super-market. "You know," said the highway engineer, looking at the super-super highway intersection drawing that lay on his drafting board, "I think we're licked."

Is there any teacher, or prophet, or philosopher who can help us find our way again to first-hand living? Our culture batters down the individual but can individuals at last batter down culture? Can man truly be a remaker of what man has made or must we wait until we are licked and some kind of mass movement sets in from a new mass interest?

Emerson is the philosopher who will aid us without standing in our way. "Only so much do I know as I have lived . . ." he says, "thinking is the function. Living is the functionary." By this Emerson does not mean, as do some in our day, that we should stop going to movies and stop watching television and do more reading; he goes beyond that. "Books are for the scholar's idle times. When we read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings." The scholar as well as the constant movie-goer can miss first-hand living. "He (the scholar) was a profane person and became a showman, turning his gifts to a marketable use and not to his own sustenance and growth (the preacher). It was found that the intellect could be independently developed, that is, in separation from the man, as any single organ can be invigorated, and the result was monstrous."

Two things have been taken from the city man, nature and solitude, and he is baffled as he tries to recover them, yet the urge is there and the popularity of such books as *The Sea Around Us* and *Seven Storey Mountain* indicate the yearning within man to know himself and to know the world in which he lives. City man has lost the stars and the seasons, the sunrise and the sunset, the song of birds and peepers from the marshes in the Spring, the swelling buds of trees and wild-flowers, wood-smoke, and the fragrance of new-mown hay. And as he has lost touch with nature he has lost touch with himself.

"The little needle always knows the North,
The little bird remembereth his note,
And this wise Seer within me never errs.
I never taught it what it teaches me;
I only follow when I act aright."

But the magnetic field has been disturbed and the little needle swings erratically on its pivot.

Now, as to Emerson and a Unitarian weakness. Unitarians have a way of generating an irresponsible freedom which can be

illustrated from the actions of youth, adults, leaders, ministers and even whole churches. The lack of self-discipline in our midst indicates how little recognition of Emerson there is in modern Unitarianism. Does any member have an obligation to either minister or church? No, he may go out into the community and spread false derogatory reports with immunity. Does any minister have an obligation to the Association? No, he is a free agent to think, say, and do as he pleases. Do young people have an obligation as they represent their religion at inter-church meetings? No, they are free to ridicule everything that they do not believe.

We often lack common sense, good manners, mutual loyalty, and it would appear, most of all, shared convictions. How often we hear, *ad nauseam* that Unitarians are free to think as they please! When a man is paid by the American Unitarian Association as a leader in a particular field, we have the right to assume that he knows something about Unitarianism and about the age group in which he is to work. When he appears before a group of neophytes to tell them that we Unitarians believe as we please and that is why we are Unitarians, it is time for Emerson to turn over again, if he has ever had occasion to stop spinning. It is also time to seek state funds for a new wing for the State Asylum.

It is fortunate, at least, that such talk about freedom is not true. It is not likely that any Unitarian board, past, present, or future would accept into fellowship a group of fifty people who had organised around the conviction that the moon is made of cheese and that each member is free to believe what kind of cheese it is.

If Unitarians are free to believe as they please, then Unitarianism is an escape from the realities of life, and a Unitarian is as much the victim of second-hand living and the brutalised conscience as anyone. He can be like the woman so tender-hearted that she cries in the movies at the antics on the screen while she turns in anger at the antics of her little boy who begs to go to the toilet. A new arrival in our fellowship thinks that he has observed in Unitarianism a smugness and a holier-than-thou attitude. At the idea of freedom to think as we please he is prompted to tell of a friend of his who wanted to think as he pleased. He wanted to live seven distinct lives, each completely separated from the other, and one of them being a whole lifetime of sitting under a coconut tree. The man did finally think as he pleased and is now the ward of a State Hospital. "It is pleasant to think as you please," says the narrator of this story, "We do not like to face the realities of life."

When Emerson's teaching of non-conformity is taken to mean that we are free to think as we please, he suffers the fate of all teachers who have had their philosophy twisted to an opposite meaning. "The dice are loaded; the colours are fast . . . there is no room for hypocrisy, no margin for choice," said Emerson.

Every man is limited by his commitments and by the realities of life and a Unitarian, as Emerson would have every man, is no

more free to think and do as he pleases than an honest man is free to rob a bank and remain an honest man. The man who goes to work in a laboratory of science is committed to the laws of nature and when he will no longer honour those laws, but insists upon following directions from a text on astrology, he ceases to be a scientist.

Unitarians are not free; they are committed or they are nothing. We are committed to the authority of evidence. We are committed to be free from other people's absolutes and to enforce none of our own. We are committed to seek the highest good for our fellowmen and for ourselves. We are committed to brotherhood in the very real sense that we seek no gain for ourselves that brings loss to others. We can put our commitment together piece-meal and it would be a much more profitable experience than advertising by courier from coast-to-coast that we are free to think as we please. We have seen what some of these free people do.

Unitarians are free from infallibility, as they are free from the authority of traditions, institutions, books and persons, that they may be committed to a greater authority, one that they find within. It is this freedom from infallibility that protects them. The individual experiences in part and sees through a glass darkly. Therefore, consistency be damned. Let a man be inconsistent with his bad guesses and past mistakes. Let him guess again to-day and try again. And with consistency let every self-proclaimed infallible authority be damned; a man will know for himself or he will not know at all. And even when a man feels that he has seen clearer than most he is still like the author who knows the story better than he can write it and so having written it discovers that it is not quite the story he meant to tell.

Since men are fallible, then, they must be open to conversion and self-criticism. They must in a most genuine sense be humble, ready to cast aside traditions and judgments of the past, ready to listen, to learn and to change.

The Emerson doctrine of the absolute avoids the pitfalls of the other systems which have wrought havoc in arrogance, cruelty, blind allegiance, fanaticism, and divisiveness. Unitarians have wanted to be free from these evils. We have detested outer authority based on absolutes because we have seen its consequences across history's pages and have suffered in such men as Michael Servetus. But where, we might ask ourselves, did we get the idea that being free from infallible authority is synonymous with recognising no absolute? It may be that we will not agree with Emerson's idea of the absolute, but he gives us pause for the re-examination of principles and values and the meaning of freedom. An outer authority is no more the guarantee of an absolute, than an absolute is the guarantee of an outer authority. On this we probably agree, but we cannot take this to mean that the absence of an infallible authority is proof that there is no absolute. Emerson has made us

see this and, as he places authority within the individual, makes us look upon life with new excitement.

Here in Emerson one finds humanism in all of its greatness and theism in all its aspirations. Here is life in all of its hard facts and in all of its beauty, in all of its reality and in all of its mystery. If ever there was an open religion for an open society it is here. And if ever there can be freedom without loss of responsibility it is here.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was the eighth of his family to serve as a minister of a New England church. The stock from which he came was a blend of self-reliance and love of liberty typical of the Yankee. One of his preaching forefathers is said to have prayed every night that no descendant of his might ever be rich. Ralph Waldo Emerson's character was moulded of hard work and self-discipline. His father died when he was eight years old and his boyhood was lived in a Spartan atmosphere. He lost his beautiful wife after a three year marriage and his son who was just beginning to run and grow. He could talk of the realities of life first-hand for the sorrows were his as well as the refulgent summers.

His idealism and reflective nature lead him into experiments and reforms that he could drop when it did not seem that they worked. He tried vegetarianism until he was convinced that it didn't do him any good. I would like to hear what a conversation between Shaw and Emerson on the subject might be like. He tried having the house servants sit at the table with the rest of the family, an arrangement that the servants complained of as being too inconvenient and there was also some mention of an objection to the poet's table manners! He had a theory that part of a scholar's life should be hard manual labour and discovered for himself that "hard labour in the fields meant poor work in the study."

On a present day pamphlet of the Second Church in Boston we find these words, "This is the only Church in which the eminent philosopher and man of letters, Ralph Waldo Emerson, ever served as a minister and the Second Church remembers his ministry with affection and pride." It is probably too harsh a statement to say that the Second Church drove Emerson out of the ministry, but it certainly did reject his leadership and in rejecting his leadership caused one of the greatest losses that the Unitarian pulpit has suffered. Somehow it is strange to find them remembering this with affection and pride. The present is forever raising memorials to dead prophets and scaffolds to live ones.

To Emerson's monument I would strike these words of Henry Van Dyke, who, incidentally, is the author of the essay on Emerson in the 9th edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*: *His supreme task was to befriend and guide the inner life of man.*

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The World Church

GERALD WALTERS

IT has become increasingly clear that the difficulties of the Ecumenical movement all spring from one root—what has been called “the misunderstanding of the Church,” the failure of the individual churches to understand the essential nature of the Body of Christ of which they are all members. The movement has yet in fact to develop an ecumenical theology in which the various churches are seen in organic relationship to each other through the Church in its fulness. It is true that it has already been recognised that membership of the Church is something more than adherence to any particular institution. By the Toronto statement of 1950 the member churches acknowledge that “membership of the Church of Christ is more inclusive than membership of their own church body.” But that is as far as the majority are prepared to move from their own particular positions. The tendency is still strong for the various communions to regard the others as not being churches “in the true sense of the word.” They claim to see in the others merely “the elements” of the true church. All would be well if this meant that each church recognised how far all of them fall short of the Church in its perfection, but this is far from being the implication. On the contrary, this attitude rests on a dangerous confusion of the Church with credal assertions, formulae, historical traditions, and the whole apparatus of institutionalised exclusiveness.

An ecumenical theology therefore must begin by drawing a fundamental distinction between the Church and the historical churches. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the true Church can never be an institution since it is essentially a fellowship of the “people of God,” a living Body of which Christ is the living Head. There is not, and never has been, an ideal form of institutionalised church existing like a Platonic form *ab initio*, an organisation “according to the will of its author exactly as he instituted it.” Christ did not found an organisation; he instituted a fellowship, a union of believers with himself. The true Church therefore is a vital organic relationship, not a static institution. The fact that in human society this relationship becomes institutionalised in varying degrees and in varying ways must not be allowed to obscure this fundamental truth.

The immense research of the past century into the history, and particularly the origins of the Church, has made it clear that there has always existed a tension between social and political pressure towards institutionalising, and that essentially spiritual relationship which cannot be limited or contained by organisation. Even in the primitive churches of the New Testament there was a clash between what have been called the “Johannine” and the “Palestinian”

conceptions, the one stressing the spiritual unity of independent groups of believers, the other concentrating upon its administrative and organisational aspects. Again, the mediaeval Roman church was very largely the spiritually institutionalised counterpart of the Imperial system under which Christianity was first legalised. Thus the Reformation of the sixteenth century was essentially a revolt against the narrow legalism of the institution, a determination to go back *ad fontes*, to renew through the power of the Spirit the original life of the primitive church. The proliferation of the post-Reformation churches indicates the diversity of forms within which vital relationship with Christ can be experienced. But even the reformed churches could not avoid falling into institutionalism and exclusiveness, becoming as intolerant as the system from which they had broken.

This then is the essential dilemma. No church can exist without institutional forms. Creeds, liturgies, formulae, or, as with the Society of Friends, the deliberate absence of them, are the means by which believers are brought into fellowship with Christ. But it is the nature of the institution to breed intolerance, to demand for itself the loyalty which should belong to the wider spiritual association. Organisation is essential, from the rigid hierarchy of episcopalian systems to the limited forms of societies like the Friends. But organisation tends to stifle the life of the Spirit. That sense of vital relationship with Christ which is the true Church, becomes secondary to the maintenance of the separate organisations. What then is to be done? Certainly not to create another "Super Church" or even a "Federation of Churches," for this would be to perpetuate the legalistic conception of the Church, to set up the old organisation writ large. Nor are they called upon at this stage to abandon their traditional forms. Each individual church must rather endeavour to make use of its own forms in order to further the growth of that divine fellowship which is the true Church.

This implies a radical change in the way each organisation looks on its own traditions. No longer is each to see its own institutionalised form as the centre, with all other churches in varying degrees of peripheral relationship to it. Christ has to be seen as the centre, with each group of believers drawing its vitality from him. Christ is the vine, and the churches are the branches; their relationship is primarily to him, and through him to each other. No one form of organisation has a monopoly of Christ, and no one church organisation can claim to be the Church in its fulness. Equally it must be recognised that no form of organisation or doctrinal statement which acknowledges Christ, no matter how far it might be thought to diverge from some preconceived ideal, is precluded from being a real instrument of fellowship. God may use the ritualised sacrament of the Mass or the non-sacramental fellowship of believers equally to draw men to him. It is in this sense that no church can think of itself as the full Church. As Pierre Maury, a pastor of the French Reformed Church has said: "I

do not consider my own church a full and true Church. Nor the High churches neither, nor the church of Rome." The true Church is a spiritual unity with Christ, and the individual churches are the rich diversity by which he is to be known.

It is clear that the Ecumenical movement provides an opportunity for the growth of this realisation, since through its agency individuals may experience for themselves the contributions of each communion to enrich the life of the whole Church. But it has unhappily to be admitted that the older institutions lag far behind this newly realised conception of the Church. As Bishop Bell, one of the inspired leaders of the Ecumenical movement, has said: "side by side with the growth of the ecumenical fellowship there has been a growth in the tenacity with which the churches maintain their positions." If this were a desire on the part of the various organisations to develop the best of their traditions within the fellowship of the whole, the tendency would not hinder the development of the ecumenical spirit. This however is far from the truth, and all too often the maintenance of a tradition means narrowness and restriction. The institution triumphs temporarily over the Church.

But God is no respecter of institutions. With or without the consent of the organisations, that fellowship which is the true Church will continue to become real and actual. It is significant that the greatest pressure upon the barriers of the institutions is coming from the Asian and, to a lesser extent, the African churches. The old disputes and sectarian rivalries have not obscured for the younger churches the essential nature of the fellowship of the Church. Organisations born out of special Western social and historical conditions have not the same validity for them. Unity in Christ is for them the one dominant fact besides which all denominational difference is largely irrelevant. The older churches have much to learn from them, both in the understanding they have of the nature of the Church, and in the earnestness with which they desire unity. God is working in history, and there can be no doubt that as the Asian peoples are thrust into the foreground of world affairs, so too the younger churches will play a dominant role in shaping the outlook of the Church of the future.

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Expostulation: "Is God Omniscient?"

In her article "The Experience of Death and Rebirth" (Vol. 7, Pt. iii, p.117), Dr. Jane Darroch writes: "Most of us are committed to believing in His (God's) omniscience, even although we do not fully understand it." But I would say: "Are we so committed?" To me the idea of an omnipotent and omniscient God presents insuperable difficulties, both moral and intellectual. If God is all-powerful and all-knowing then surely my individual life is completely determined; I have no freedom of choice whatever, and to me such a suggestion is nonsense.

I accept the definition which was given to us by Jesus—God is "Our Father"; and I have no other conception of "Father" but the human one. Human fatherhood at its highest level is a continuous experience, a continuing growth into a deeper understanding and a wider tolerance, a going-on into a richer sympathy with suffering and frustration, a splendid sharing in happiness and joys; always becoming *more human*; always increasingly worthy of trust and confidence. And this is just how I conceive of God as Father, and how I respond to Him. Creative life is always progressive and developing, and creative life is "God." An omnipotent and omniscient God would be a stagnant God—a monstrosity.

I believe that God is always *learning* from us His children. I believe that He is always becoming increasingly trustworthy because He is always understanding us *better*. I cannot understand how God can be the "ground of our being" in any other sense than this; and the conviction that the creative life of the universe *is* such a "Father" is my rock and my confidence as I face the future with its sunlight and shadow. And it is just because I believe Jesus meant all this by "Our Father" that I dare to call myself a Christian.

I have expressed myself in direct and homely language and I do not apologise for so doing. The cause of real religion is hindered, and the minds of ordinary folk are bemused, by theological 'jargon.'

Worthing.

MALCOLM RUTT

Krishnamurti's "First and Last Freedom"*

Reviewed by E. SHIRVELL PRICE, M.A.

There are here few recognisable landmarks for the modern western mind; no familiar scientific or metaphysical concepts; no use of psychological or theological systems; no erudition, literary or historical; no passionate exposition; no logical analysis and hardly

*Gollancz 1954. pp 288. 13/6.

any development of thesis. Indeed, I soon had the impression that I was being led in circles. Was he a man of only one idea? Then, what idea? Try to define it and one realises that it is his whole attitude to life which gives the impression that he is playing variations on a single theme, albeit a timeless theme, like the gospels, but in a different key.

There was profound admiration for Krishnamurti when, as a young man, he refused to fill the rôle of a re-incarnated Krishna, so sedulously fostered and evoked by Mrs. Annie Besant, his guardian. And when, in the middle twenties, he dissolved the world-wide organisation which others had built up around him, there were those who felt that this renunciation was an act of supreme honesty and moral courage. Mrs. Besant had built better than she knew! The repudiation of his Messiahship and all her plans for him, was a surer indication of profound humility and spiritual integrity than the acceptance of that rôle could have been.

It is no good thinking that you can go to this book with critical intent and dismiss his ideas because they don't fit in with yours. Time and again I found his exposition exasperating. No book I have ever read is so scored with objections and criticisms—sometimes three or four major issues on a page. When I had done, it began to dawn upon me that all my criticisms recoiled upon my own head. It was not that they were wrong but beside his purpose, and it was I who was being judged. He even made me wish that I too could say as he does so naïvely and yet so naturally on his first page: "I have not read any books on psychology or any religious books, fortunately."

His idea of truth and of that right thinking which leads to the experience of, rather than the knowledge of, the truth, has nothing to do with logic or intellectual power or following a pattern or submitting to any discipline. It comes from a simpler self-awareness. Some of the great mystics when writing of the effortless realisation of the self and its "becoming" speak the same tongue. There is wisdom here, but whether one in a hundred thousand will stop to listen to what is being said, or having stopped, will be able to hear, I do not know. Perhaps the difficulty is the Eastern mind which is so foreign to our hurrying, contentious lives. But even if this is so, it cannot be written off.* Even in ourselves it is there as a repressed be undeveloped side of our whole human nature. Krishnamurti shows us a bridge into our deeper selves. Whether it is our first and last freedom which he offers we shall know only if we are able to cross that bridge ourselves.

*A similar attitude to life was indicated in Robert Entwistle's "Quietism: an interpretation for to-day," which appeared in this Journal, Vol. 2, Pt. iii. An understanding of Krishnamurti himself might be gained by a re-reading of Francis Terry's "The Maieutic Personality," Vol. 2, Pt. i.—ED.